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STATE OF ARIZONA
EXECUTIVE OFFICE
September 10, 1996

FIFE SYMINGTON
Governor

The Honorable Dan Glickman
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Secretary
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Glickman:

I urge you to effect major changes in the USDA's Karnal bunt eradication efforts before my worst fears are realized and the Arizona wheat industry is destroyed.

I communicated these concerns to you in my letter dated May 29, 1996, and during my meeting with your senior staff in Washington, DC on June 10, 1996. However, USDA has not significantly changed its course of action and now department actions may accomplish what no disease has ever done - devastation of the Arizona wheat industry and other commodity producers.

USDA's reaction to Karnal bunt appears to be determined more by bureaucracy than by science. In fact, the new official position of the American Phytopathological Society is that Karnal bunt is a minor disease with little risk which can be effectively managed without quarantines and without a "zero tolerance" requirement on spores in grain. That is, good science does not support USDA's quarantine or zero tolerance requirements. I share the view of zero tolerance requirements you expressed to the U.S. Agricultural Export Development Council on July 18, 1996, when you said, "Don't demand zero tolerance on something that you can't have zero tolerance on. That's a phony barrier."

Our wheat industry and our Department of Agriculture worked closely with USDA and played by the rules, but we are extremely disappointed and discouraged by the results. Our farmers have to sell high quality wheat for animal feed if only one spore is found in a sample. The reputation of Arizona wheat has been so damaged by USDA's overreaction that our farmers are having problems selling perfectly clean wheat for human consumption. It is no consolation to us that USDA's unreasonable requirements on this minor disease has led foreign importers to begin to request unreasonable requirements on other minor diseases that affect U.S. wheat from the Northwest and Midwest.

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It is distressing for me to see what appears to be USDA discrimination against Arizona. After the initial discovery of Karnal bunt in Arizona in March, 1996, USDA personnel stormed into Arizona and soon quarantined the entire state. Later findings of Karnal bunt in northern California and Alabama, however, led to no quarantine or any other drastic actions like those we saw in Arizona. We will not stand for enforcement of unreasonable measures in Arizona when findings in other states are treated lightly. USDA needs to have a reasonable policy that will be enforced equally in all states where Karnal bunt has been detected.

The Arizona Department of Agriculture made a scientifically sound proposal to USDA on September 3, 1996, for Karnal bunt control measures that would effectively manage what little risk does exist with this disease while not requiring hundreds of regulators in Arizona. We need to work together using the best science available to manage this minor disease.

My office has arranged for me and Arizona Department of Agriculture officials to meet with you on September 17, 1996, in Washington, DC to review the entire Karnal bunt issue. Thank you for agreeing to the meeting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fife Symington", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Fife Symington
GOVERNOR

FS/cr